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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

[REDACTED] NSC review completed.

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

NIC 10298-82
20 December 1982

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

FROM : Assistant National Intelligence Officer for
Near East-South Asia

SUBJECT : NSC Views on Strategic Planning in Middle East

1. NSC staffer Cdr. Phil Durr briefed the undersigned on 20 December about the results of his recent visit to Lebanon, Egypt and Oman to review US military-strategic activities in the region.

2. Lebanon: Cdr. Durr reports that all of the unit commanders of the MNF believe their forces can undertake expanded peacekeeping operations successfully. Durr expects that Ambassador Habib will favor expanding the MNF's role to include some operations jointly with the Lebanese Army to quiet the Shuf region after the Israelis withdraw. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] I informed Cdr. Durr that it was the community's view that President Jumayyil's credibility is being undermined by the Shuf fighting, a process that needs to be halted as soon as possible.

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3. Egypt: Durr visited Wadi Qena airbase and the Ras Banas facilities during his visit and was impressed by the developments at both areas. The Egyptian-built facilities at Ras Banas are in good shape and the area is large enough to host very sizable numbers of US forces in a Persian Gulf crisis. In Durr's view Ras Banas is the sine qua non for any effective US military response to Gulf crisis since it alone offers the necessary facilities from which to stage large military forces into the Gulf. (Somalia and Kenya are too far away and Oman is too vulnerable.) Durr believes we need to be much more candid with the Egyptians about how critical Ras Banas is if we want to persuade them to take the political risks necessary to build up the port facilities and preposition equipment there. The Egyptians' willingness to allow prepositioning at Qena

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demonstrates Cairo's willingness to help when we clearly lay out the strategic issues involved and keep our activities discreet, i.e., no press coverage and minimal Congressional debate.

4. Nuclear Powered Warship transits of the Suez Canal: A new US initiative will get underway early next year to persuade Cairo to stop stalling on this problem and allow NPW deployments through the Canal, a move that would greatly facilitate US aircraft carrier operations in the Indian Ocean. In January, Durr plans to convene an inter-agency meeting (including CIA) to discuss a new proposal which would urge the Egyptians to sanction surface NPW ship transits but not submarine transits. This would benefit the US but not the Soviets, who have only a few surface NPW ships. Comment: Egyptian domestic political considerations play a key role in determining Cairo's policy on the Canal and I'm skeptical Mubarak will be very forthcoming on this issue.

25X1 5. Oman: Durr was much impressed by the Omani Air Force [REDACTED] US naval commanders at Diego Garcia told Durr the Omani's were the most proficient air force they have dealt with in the Gulf region.

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